

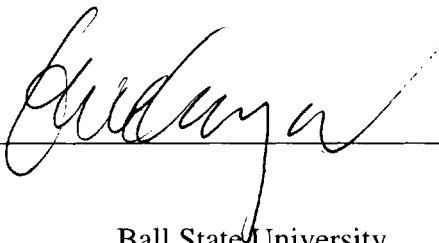
The Honors College World Wide Web Site

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Abstract:

The purpose of this thesis was to create a presence on the World Wide Web for the Ball State University Honors College. Content for the web site was gathered from the Dean and Assistant Dean, formatted as HTML pages, and posted on the University web server. A manual is contained herein so that students with a minimum amount of web authoring or computer-programming experience can learn to maintain the site in the future. Enclosed is a CD-ROM containing a snapshot of the site, and various useful graphics and templates.

SpCell
100
21
2480
.24
1907
.573

Contents:

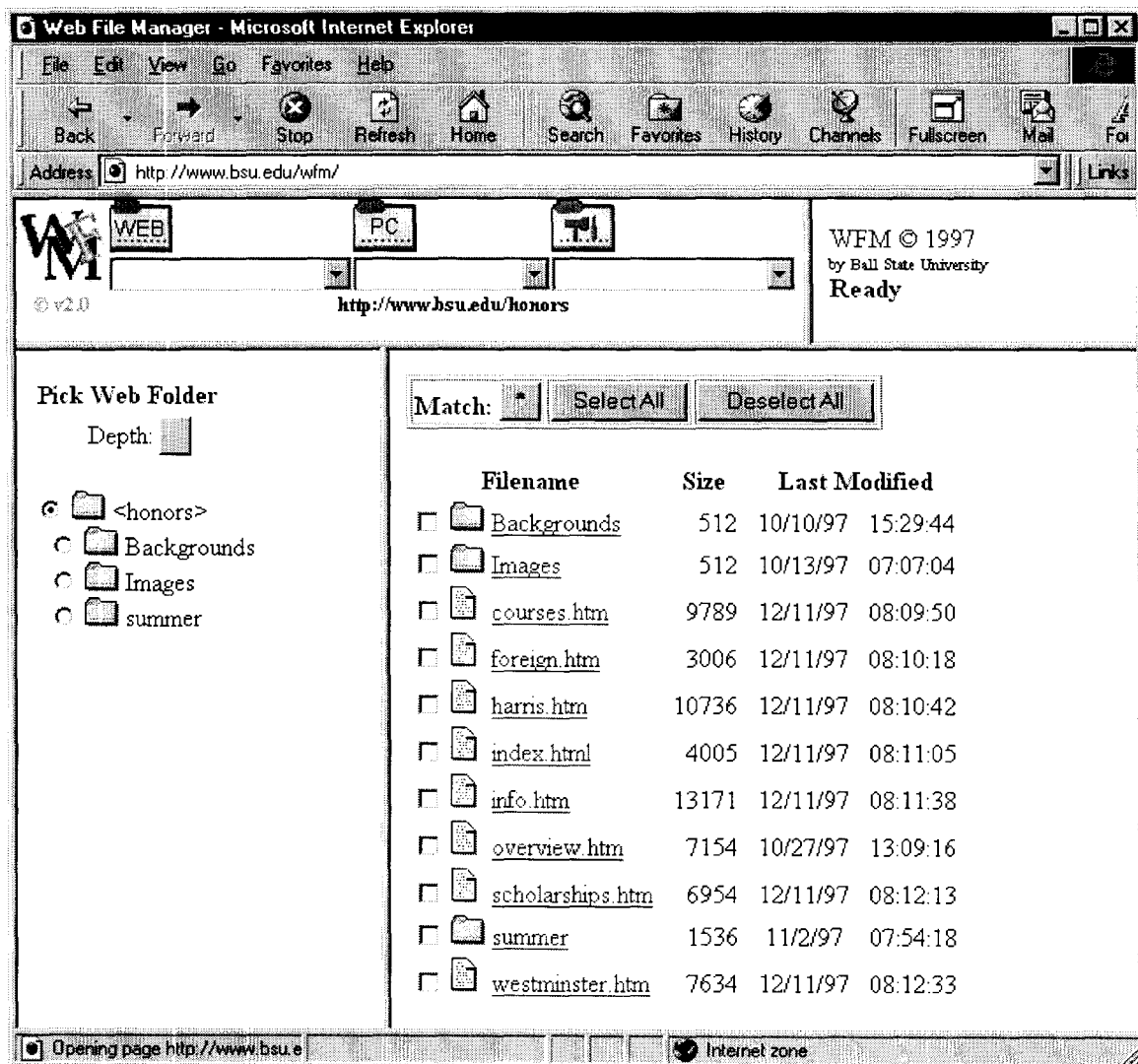
- I. Overview of the BSU web authoring system
- II. Strategy guide for developing new content from scratch
- III. Strategy guide for updating existing content
- IV. CD-ROM with sample files

Overview:

The Ball State University web site is powered on the University's DEC VAX cluster. However, no actual VAX experience is required to maintain a web site. A user simply needs to have a VAX account (username and password) in order to log in to the web management system.

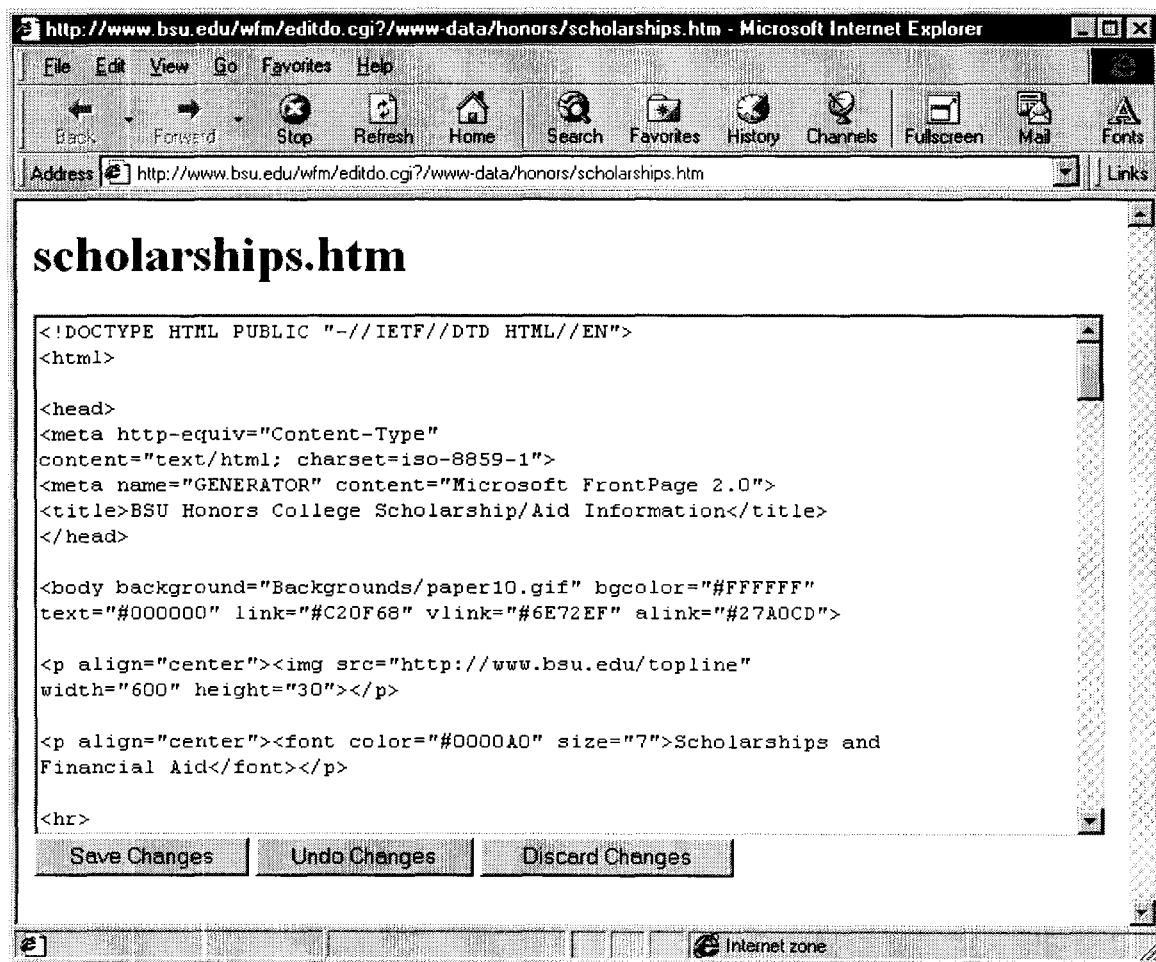
University Computing Services has developed a graphical front-end management package that runs in a web browser for maintaining web sites. It is called WFM (Web File Management), and it is presently in its 2.0 release. Before you can use the system, you must be granted rights to edit the Honors College area. The present method of obtaining this access involves contacting Denise Jones (preferably with recommendation from the Dean) at djones@bsu.edu. She is involved with web design for the entire university, and she is a good resource if you have design questions or problems understanding WFM.

You must use a web browser to connect to WFM. The University will recommend that you use Netscape, but Internet Explorer versions 3.0 and 4.0 will work as well. To log in to the system, go to <http://www.bsu.edu/wfm/>. Your browser will then ask for a username and password. You must enter the same username and password you use when you log into the VAX system. You will then be taken to a page that looks like the following:



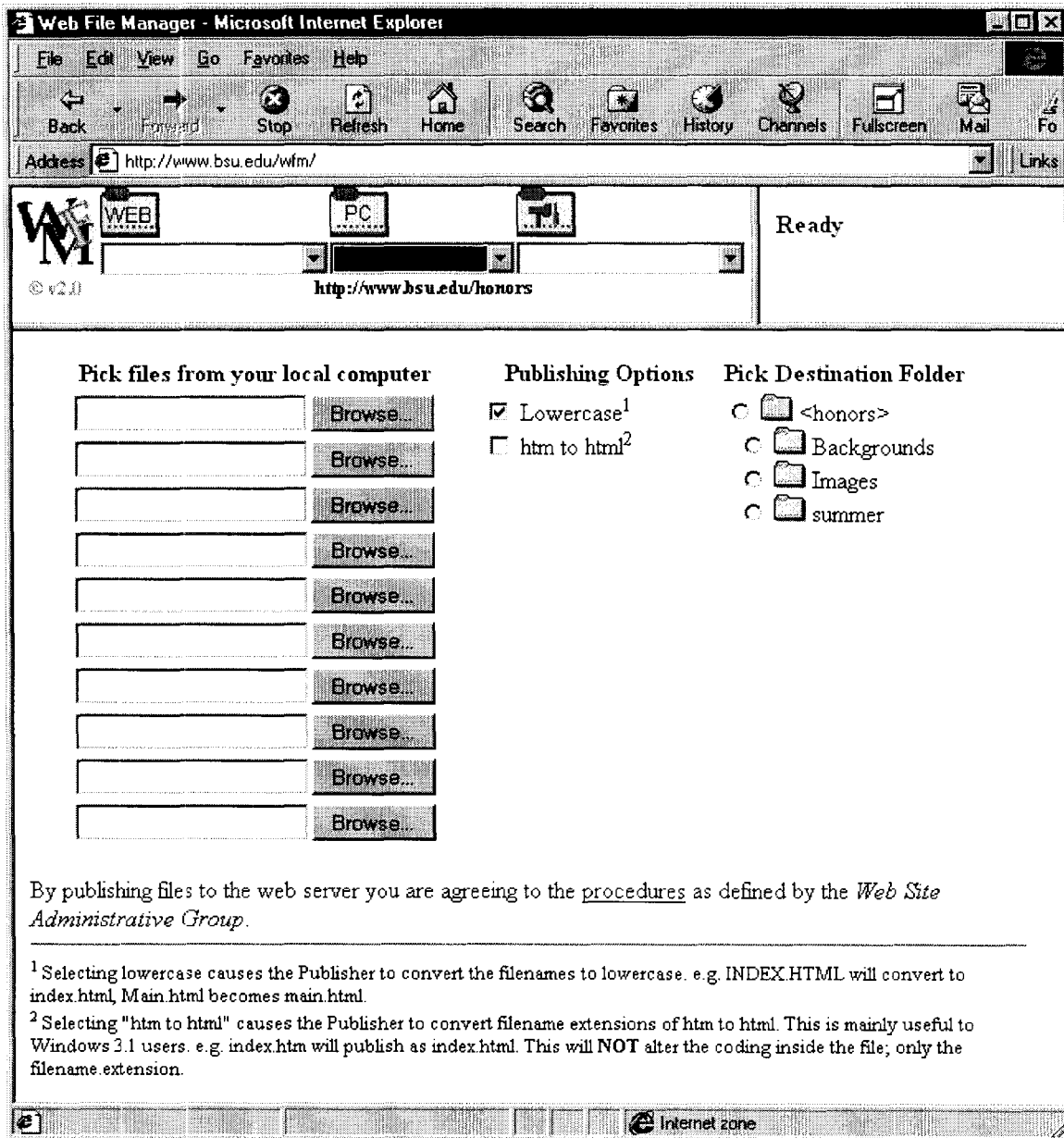
WFM is divided into four different frames. The frame along the top with the three folder icons and list boxes contains the drop-down menus for the program's functions. The small frame in the upper-right corner displays status and error messages. The frame on the left displays the hierarchy of folders in the site, and the frame on the right displays the files contained in the presently selected folder. To choose a new folder, simply select the radio button next to it, and the window on the right will update momentarily with its contents. To select one or more files to perform an operation on, click the check box next to the file(s). To view a file, click the name of the file. An additional browser window will open up and display the page/graphic.

The Web menu contains operations that you might want to perform on files. For example, if you wanted to update a deadline date on the scholarships page, you would click the check box next to scholarships.htm and then select Edit Source from the Web menu. This would cause a new browser window to appear like the one below:



You could then make the modifications you would like and then click "Save Changes" or "Discard Changes" if you decide not to make a modification.

The PC menu contains operations that allow you to move HTML files from your PC to the web server. If you had a brand new page you wanted to publish, you would select Publish Local File and the following page would appear:

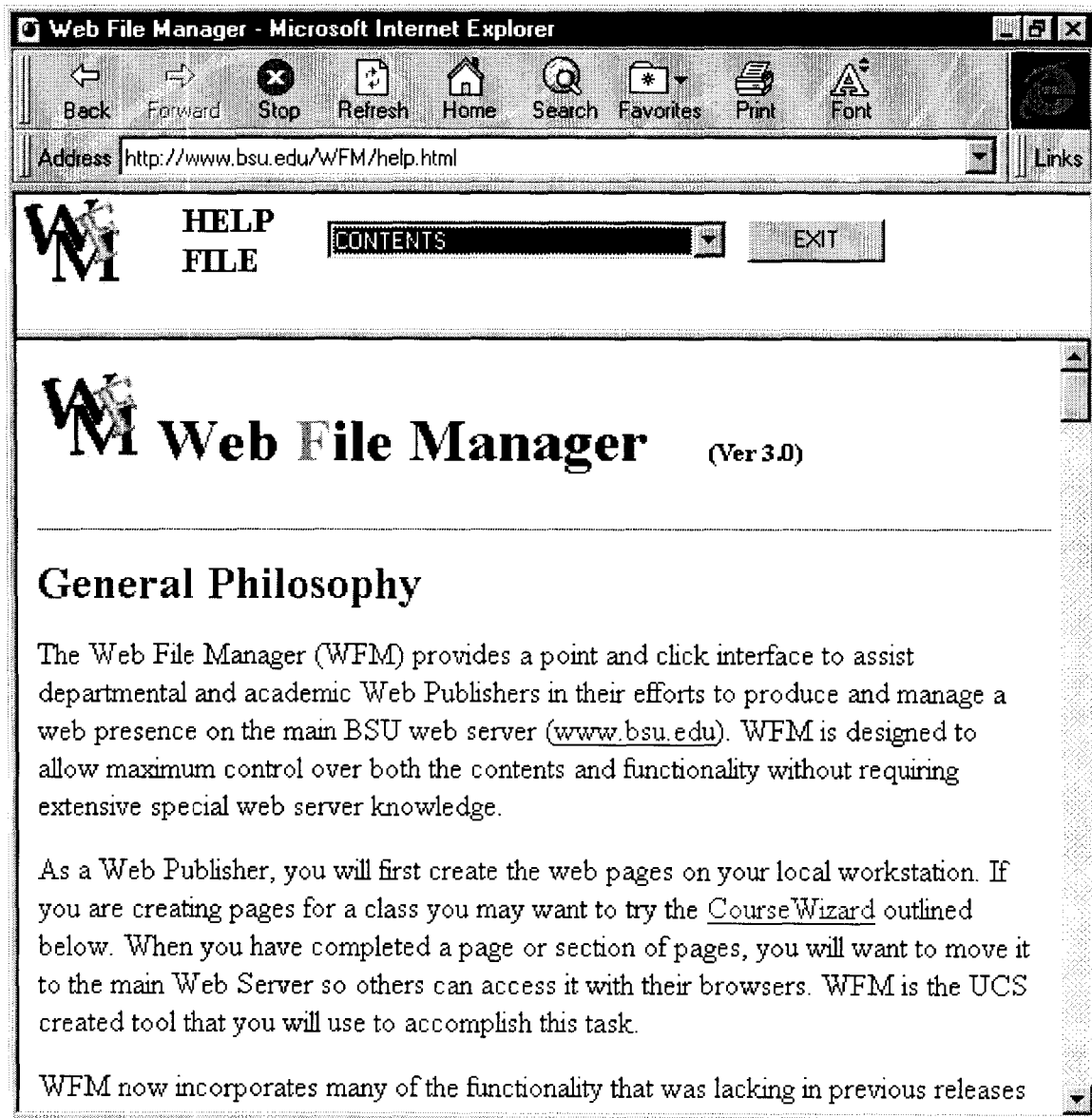


On the left, you select the location of the local files you want to send. Clicking the Browse buttons will allow you to navigate your hard drive(s) to look for the files. On the right, you select the folder on the web server where you want the files to go (note that although you may choose up to ten files to send, they must all go into the same folder). Additionally, there are options to automatically convert filenames to lower case and to turn HTM file extensions into HTML extensions. This is useful because Mac and Windows PCs can preserve the case of a filename for display, but these operating systems are not case sensitive. The system on which the web server runs is case sensitive. Keeping that in mind, it is always a good idea to type file names in lowercase when you create your documents, so that they will run on any platform without modification.

The Tools menu contains miscellaneous operations. You can grant or revoke access to edit the site (although it is *highly* unlikely that you will need to do this). You

can also view error information for the site, as well as access statistics. The statistics will allow you to do two things: You can see how many times each page in the site has been accessed, and you can also determine how many times a given computer has accessed the site. This will give you a good idea of which pages in the site you should focus your design efforts on, in addition to the main page.

When you need more information on a particular operation of the system, you can consult the online help. To open the help window, select Help from the Web menu. The page below will open in a new browser window:



You can read continuously through the file, or you can select a topic from the drop-down list at the top and jump directly to that section. There is an entry in the list for each menu item in the three menus.

Developing New Content:

The first step to developing content for a web site is to choose an editor. It is possible to create HTML files simply by typing in a text editor. However, the commands (called tags) are somewhat archaic, which makes this means of development undesirable. Fortunately, there are several commercially available packages for developing web pages graphically, including Adobe Pagemill, HoTMetaL, and my personal favorite Microsoft FrontPage. All of these packages offer a rich set of tools for developing web pages. However, if you don't have one of these packages available to you, you can use the editing features of Netscape's Navigator Gold browsing package. This is the standard web browser for the University, and you can find it on a number of Macintosh and Windows based PCs in the University computer labs.

Each web page editor is different, and I cannot give you specific instructions for using any one of them. However, I would suggest that before you design a page for the Honors College web site that you develop a few test pages and save them on disk for testing in order to familiarize yourself with the editor.

When designing a web page for Ball State University, there are predefined header and footer sections that you should place on your page. There are two reasons for this: consistency of navigation throughout the greater Ball State web site, and legal protection. The following is a picture of the current header graphic, topline.gif:



The HTML source code for including this graphic looks like this:

```
<p align="center"><br>
<font color="#800040" size="7">Ball State University</font></p>
```

If you're using an editor, there should be a menu item to insert an image. Select this. It will then ask for the location of the image. Rather than specify a place on disk, type `http://www.bsu.edu/topline` instead.

The footer is somewhat more complex because it involves buttons that allow the user to return to the BSU homepage, jump to the search page, etc. Also, email links to the page author and webmaster are there, along with a modification date and a legal statement. The whole collection looks like this:

[HOME](#) [ASK](#) [GUEST](#) [ABOUT](#) [MAP](#) [SEARCH](#) [HELP](#)

[Author](#) | [Last Modification: November, 1997](#) | [Technical comments to the Webmaster](#)

Ball State University practices equal opportunity in education and employment and is strongly and actively committed to diversity within its community. Links contained in this file to information provided by other organizations are presented as a service and neither constitute nor imply endorsement or warranty.

The source code for this group of entities looks like this:


```

<p align="center"><br>
<a href="http://www.bsu.edu/home.html"></a> <a href="mailto:ASKBSU@bsu.edu"></a> <a
href="http://www.bsu.edu/cgi-bin/guest"></a> <a
href="http://www.bsu.edu/UP/about/bsu.html"></a> <a
href="http://www.bsu.edu/UP/map/indiana.html"></a> <a
href="http://www.bsu.edu/htmls/search.html"></a> <a
href="http://www.bsu.edu/home_help.html"></a> <br>
</p>
<div align="center"><center>

<address>
  <a href="mailto:00bfmeyer@bsu.edu">Author</a> | Last
  Modification: November 1997 | <a
  href="mailto:webmaster@bsu.edu">Technical comments to the
  Webmaster</a>
</address>
</center></div>

<p align="center"><br>
<font size="2">Ball State University practices equal opportunity
in education and employment and is strongly and actively
committed to diversity within its community. <br>
Links contained in this file to information provided by other
organizations are presented as a service and neither constitute
nor imply endorsement or warranty.</font><font size="4"> <br>
</font><br>
</p>

```

Since the footer consists of more than one entity, using an editor to set everything up by hand would be very tedious. However, a template page called `template.htm` is included on the CD-ROM that accompanies this thesis, which already has the header and footer set up. It is your responsibility to set the "Last Modification" date when you create a new page, and to modify it each time you update a page. Also, leave the email address for author set to `00bfmeyer@bsu.edu` (Dr. Bruce Meyer, Dean of the Honors College)

After meeting these two requirements, you are free to do what you like (within taste) while designing your web page. I would suggest that if you have your own PC or a PC that you have regular access to that you set up the pages in a directory there and make sure everything looks just right before you post them to the server. While working on the initial set of pages, I set everything up under Microsoft Personal Web Server on my Windows NT workstation. This proved to be an invaluable tool, because it took all of the

guesswork out of the process because I was testing the pages on a real web server before posting them for public viewing. There are several free and shareware web servers available, and you should be able to find one for any platform, should you desire to do so.

After you have completed the design of a page, you then need to go about posting it to the server. Presently, the site is organized such that the HTML pages reside in the root directory, and two directories called "Backgrounds" and "Images" store the related graphics. It is recommended that you continue with this scheme of partitioning the files by type. Therefore, you will need to perform up to three distinct publish actions in WFM: Once for the HTML page(s) you are publishing into the <honors> directory, once for the inline graphics you are using into the Images directory (if any), and once for any background images you are using into the Backgrounds directory (if any).

Remember to always insert links into your pages using lowercase letters, and to select the Lowercase option when publishing the files with WFM. If you do not, the likely result will be that graphics do not get displayed, or that clicking on links to new pages will cause "HTTP object not found" errors.

Modifying Existing Content:

Several scenarios will arise where you will need to modify existing pages. One instance would be when you add a new page, because you must add a link to it from one of your existing pages. If the link you wish to add is purely text, the simplest way to create it would be by editing the source for the existing page through WFM. However, if you are not proficient with HTML coding or you wish to use a graphic as a link, you will be better off to simply edit the existing page locally, test it, and then post it to replace the current copy.

Another reason to edit pages is to update time-sensitive information. The Honors College site contains a great deal of near-static information: it's good for about one year or semester before it's out of date. This includes deadlines for scholarship and study abroad applications, Honors College colloquia offerings for the coming semester, and the sponsors for study abroad programs. As a general rule of thumb, if you're just editing a small amount of text or replacing a graphic with one of the exact same size, it will be faster and more convenient to just edit the HTML file in place using WFM. Otherwise, you should edit the page locally and replace the one on the server with your new one. Always remember that when you edit a page that you are responsible for updating the "Last Modified:" message at the bottom of the page (it is not done automatically by the server).

Plans were made to place the Honors College newsletter (News & Notes) on the web site, but lack of communication between the parties involved caused the project to slip. In the future, if you desire to place content that was originally laid out as a paper document with Adobe Pagemaker or Quark XPress on the web, I strongly suggest using Adobe Acrobat to make PDF files. This will save you a tremendous amount of time because no reformatting of the document is required.

CD-ROM Contents:

Enclosed is a CD-ROM that may prove to be a useful tool for developing pages for the Honors College site. It contains three folders with the following contents:

Snapshot: This contains a snapshot of the work I did for the site. Some minor changes have been made since then by others.

Template: This contains template.htm, a file that I suggest using to start new web pages for the site. It already contains the header and footer images required by the University.

Images: This contains various Honors College logos and other useful graphics.